




Department of Veterans Affairs

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION REVIEW

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAIQ NO. 7662953 | DATE | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1607 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 1/14/14 | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>Rgm</i> | 1/19/16 | | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► April 18 - June 10, 2016/North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>► 60 trainees - 16 staff/\$12,450.00 per attendee/Total cost: \$750,000.00</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation | | | | |
| <p>This 8 week course is required for newly hired VA Police officers to receive certification to perform law enforcement duties at VAMCs nationally.</p> <p>The VABPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario & role play based training. Subjects include small arms training & qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon & a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importances is the 40 hours of behavioral science training received which teach officers how to use verbal communication skills to de-escalate violent situations.</p> <p>This training provides VA Police officers with specialized training in Federal law enforcement and prepares them with the ability to deal with Veterans inflicted by TBI, PTSD, suicidal/homicidal ideation, and other critical crisis intervention & verbal de-escalation skills & techniques unique to a health care environment.</p> <p>All Police officers must successfully complete the BPOC before receiving their badge & credentials or being certified/authorized to perform any law enforcement duties. Upon graduation, newly assigned officers will: a) have completed certification requirements; and b) respond to & control various calls for service such as active shooter, workplace violence, disturbances, customer service/assistance, etc.</p> | | | | |
| FOR OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY USE ONLY | | | | |
| SPECIAL HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS | DATE OF INCOMING | DATE VA RECEIVED | DATE OF INTERIM | DATE RECEIVED IN 001B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RUSH <input type="checkbox"/> DATE DOCUMENT FOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NOTARIZE | | | | |

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|--|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
|  Department of Veterans Affairs | | STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION REVIEW | | |
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAHQ NO. 7678715 | DATE | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1610 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 3/17 | Recommend: Approval X | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 3/20 | Approved X Disapproved _____ | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► July 11 - September 2, 2016 / North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>► 60 trainees & 16 staff / \$12,450.00 per attendee / Total Cost: \$750,000</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation This 8 week course is required for newly hired VA Police Officers to receive certification to perform law enforcement duties at VAMCs nationally. | | | | |
| The VABPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario & role play based training. Subjects include small arms training & qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon & a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importances is the 40 hours of behavioral science training received which teach officers how to use verbal communication skills to de-escalate violent situations. | | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> RUSH <input type="checkbox"/> NOTARIZE | | | | 3/22/10 |



Department of Veterans Affairs

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION REVIEW

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|--|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Matt Bristol (202) 632-7129 MB | VAHQ NO. 7592396 | DATE 04/08/2015 | DATE DUE 05/27/2015 |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | SUBJECT 36th National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG), Salt Lake City, Utah |
|-----------------------------------|---|

| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS |
|--|----------|---------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | MB | 4/17/15 | Recommended |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | MB | 4/17/15 | OK |

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Subject to approval, our intent is to hold the 36th NVWG in Salt Lake City, Utah, June 27-July 2, 2016. Approximately 620 disabled Veterans are expected to compete, with 130 VA staffers.
- ▶ OPIA is seeking SECVA approval to host this event as the costs exceeds \$500,000. The estimated total appropriated costs are \$820,000.
- ▶ We are submitting this packet early to secure the Salt Lake City convention center for \$20,000 - a significant reduction of what it would cost after June 20, 2015.

CONCURRENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation

- Conference Purpose: Approximately 620 Veterans with physical disabilities are introduced and/or compete in wheelchair sports to improve their independence and quality of life.
- Conference Optics: The NVWG represents VA's and PVA's commitment to the rehabilitation of our Nation's Veterans. VA has an MOU with PVA to co-present the NVWG annually. The NVWG develops community partnerships and receives significant media coverage -- helping to expand rehabilitation opportunities for Veterans while promoting VA services.
- Fees/costs beyond travel: Total estimated cost is \$820,000. We estimate 620 Veterans will participate and 130 VA staffers will be on VA travel for an estimated travel cost of \$291,000 and event operations costs of \$529,000. Cost per VA employee is \$2,238 and cost per Veteran is \$1,322.
- Per Diem (Lodging, M&IE): Lodging and M&IE reflect per diem for Salt Lake City, Utah. Hotel - \$106 plus \$8 tax per night, total lodging cost is \$103,740. M&IE is \$61 per day, total of \$63,440.
- Consideration of alternate methods: Face to face meeting is necessary for this type of event.
- Recurring Annual Event: 2015 event was estimated at \$870,000. (2016 event is a 6% reduction)
- Recommendation - Recommend SECVA sign this packet to continue planning for the 2016 NVWG.

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|---|---------------------|------|----------|
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Matt Bristol 202-632-7129 | VAHQ NO. 7603102 | DATE | DATE DUE |
|---|---------------------|------|----------|

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | SUBJECT 30th National Veterans Golden Age Games (NVGAG) |
|-----------------------------------|--|

| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS |
|--|--------------------|--------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 6/8/15 | Recommend: Approval <i>[Signature]</i> Disapproval _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 6/8 | Approved: <i>[Signature]</i> Disapproved: _____ |

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Detroit, Michigan / Jul 10-14, 2016
- ▶ 800 Veterans / 135 Staff
\$946 per Veteran / \$1,820 per VA attendee / Total Cost \$756,900
- ▶ \$511,200 operational expenses / \$245,700 employee travel / Lodging is \$109 per night plus \$20 tax x 135 people for 5 nights = \$87,075 / M&IE is \$56/day x 5 days = \$37,800

CONCURRENCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation

- The National Veterans Golden Age Games provides a state of the art competitive sporting event for senior Veterans, designed to optimize their health, well being and quality of life.
- Veterans 55 years and older will participate in 15 competitive events, including adaptive sporting events for wheelchair and visually impaired Veterans. Event is open to the public and typically generates positive media coverage of this VA National program.
- OPIA is recommending approval to host the 2016 NVGAG.

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Department of Veterans Affairs

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|---|------------|--|------------------|-----------------|
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAIQ NO. 7660825 | DATE | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1606 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>hjh</i> | 1/14/16 | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>Ram</i> | 1/19/16 | | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► March 28 - May 20, 2016/North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>► 60 trainees - 16 staff/\$12,450.00 per attendee/Total cost: \$750,000.00</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| <p>Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation</p> <p>This 8 week course is required for newly hired VA Police officers to receive certification to perform law enforcement duties at VAMCs nationally.</p> <p>The VABPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario & role play based training. Subjects include small arms training & qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon & a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importance is the 40 hours of behavioral science training received which teach officers how to use verbal communication skills to de-escalate violent situations.</p> <p>This training provides VA Police officers with specialized training in Federal law enforcement and prepares them with the ability to deal with Veterans inflicted by TBI, PTSD, suicidal/homicidal ideation, and other critical crisis intervention & verbal de-escalation skills & techniques unique to a health care environment.</p> <p>All Police officers must successfully complete the BPOC before receiving their badge & credentials or being certified/authorized to perform any law enforcement duties. Upon graduation, newly assigned officers will: a) have completed certification requirements; and b) respond to & control various calls for service such as active shooter, workplace violence, disturbances, customer service/assistance, etc.</p> | | | | |
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Department of Veterans Affairs

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION REVIEW

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| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAHQ NO. 000120 | DATE 11-16-15 | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1604 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 11/18/15 | Rec Approval | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>[Signature]</i> | 11/22/15 | A60222 [Signature] | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► Feb. 08 - Apr. 01, 2016/North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>16 rtc</p> <p>► 60 trainees - 14 staff/\$12,450.00 per attendee/Total cost: \$750,000.00</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| <p>Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation</p> <p>This 8 week course is required for newly hired VA Police officers to receive certification to perform law enforcement duties at VAMCs nationally.</p> <p>The VABPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario & role play based training. Subjects include small arms training & qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon & a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importances is the 40 hours of behavioral science training received which teach officers how to use verbal communication skills to de-escalate violent situations.</p> <p>This training provides VA Police officers with specialized training in Federal law enforcement and prepares them with the ability to deal with Veterans inflicted by TBI, PTSD, suicidal/homicidal ideation, and other critical crisis intervention & verbal de-escalation skills & techniques unique to a health care environment.</p> <p>All Police officers must successfully complete the BPOC before receiving their badge & credentials or being certified/authorized to perform any law enforcement duties. Upon graduation, newly assigned officers will: a) have completed certification requirements; and b) respond to & control various calls for service such as active shooter, workplace violence, disturbances, customer service/assistance, etc.</p> | | | | |
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|---|--------------|--|--|-----------------|
| NAME OF ORIGINATOR | | VAIQ NO. 7663754 | DATE | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT 2016 OPIA National Training Academy | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>Hiten</i> | 1/14/16 | Recommend: Approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disapproval <input type="checkbox"/> See me <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>Long</i> | 1/19/16 | Approve <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disapprove <input type="checkbox"/> See me <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► Dallas, TX / Aug 1-5, 2016</p> <p>► Audience: Public Affairs Professionals</p> <p>► 425 attendees / \$1,861 per attendee / Total Cost: \$791,000</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation | | | | |
| <p>* OPIA would like to host the 2016 OPIA National Training Academy in Dallas Aug 1-5, 2016.</p> <p>* With some recent exceptions, this training event has been held annually for the past twenty years for public affairs & communications professionals from VA medical facilities, regional benefits offices & cemeteries across the country.</p> <p>* This specialized training is designed to equip PAOs with the skills & techniques to do their jobs effectively. Courses are tailored to meet the specific needs of VA communicators. Curriculum will include basic, intermediate & advanced courses & will focus on instruction that is both practical and applicable.</p> <p>* Training emphasis will be on crisis operations & the importance of communicating our commitment to VA's mission & ICARE Values and what we have done over the past six months to improve facility operations & earn the trust of our Veterans.</p> <p>* Given the fact many VA staff who perform public affairs functions have no formal training & often have other primary duties, this annual training event is essential to bring all VA public affairs staffers to a standard basic proficiency level.</p> | | | | |
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| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAIQ NO. 000123 | DATE 11-16-15 | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1603 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>hmc</i> | 11/18 | Rec Approval | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>mm</i> | 11/22 | APPROVED | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► Jan. 04 - Feb. 26, 2016/North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>16 rlc</p> <p>► 60 trainees - 14 staff/\$12,450.00 per attendee/Total cost: \$750,000.00</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
| Purpose - Discussion - Recommendation | | | | |
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| NAME OF ORIGINATOR Kevin T. Hanretta | | VAHQ NO. 7679532 | DATE | DATE DUE |
| NAME OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY STAFF | | SUBJECT VA Basic Police Officer Course (VABPOC) Class Number 1611 | | |
| ROUTING | INITIALS | DATE | COMMENTS | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXEC SEC. | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR ADVISOR | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COSVA | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEPSECVA | <i>MW</i> | 3/17 | Recommend: Approval X | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SECVA | <i>Man</i> | 3/16 | Approved <i>Man</i> Disapproved | |
| KEY POINTS | | | | |
| <p>► August 1 - September 23, 2016. / North Little Rock, Arkansas</p> <p>► 60 trainees & 16 staff / \$12,450.00 per attendee / Total Cost: \$750,000</p> <p>►</p> | | | | |
| CONCURRENCE | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | | | | |
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Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: September 14, 2015

From: Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2015-6-b Denver CO Training in FY16

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training classes in October 2015 through November 2015. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.
 - a. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)
 1. The execution of this conference is subject to the availability of FY 16 funds. If FY 16 funds are not available, this request will be canceled
 2. Comparative analysis for venue and cost have been conducted
 3. Conference participation is limited to required attendees
 4. This conference is necessary for the training of 47 VBA Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) and 53 Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs)
2. Purpose: The Challenge program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) or Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training accelerates by six months the achievement of journey-level status of Challenge graduates. It is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.
3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:
 - Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy;
 - Newly hired Rating Veterans Service Representatives will demonstrate mastery by rating at least one simple (one-to-two issue) claim per day at 90% accuracy

4. Justification:

a. Challenge training accelerates proficiency in new employees.

(1) Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. On completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.

(2) VBA normally conducts this training in a centralized model. Challenge 2015-6 is proposed in a distributed model to increase training capacity and constrain costs while preserving the emphasis on building proficiency.

b. Face-to-face Challenge training is required for effective student and instructor interaction.

(1) Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Challenge training has achieved dramatic results due to the adult learning principles built into the training methods.

(3) The personnel selected as instructors are highly experienced, journey-level employees, recommended by their regional office leaders and prepared with standardized training provided by Compensation Service. In the face-to-face Challenge training environment, the instructors gain substantial practice in teaching difficult topics and guiding the work effort of others.

(4) Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above, and because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) VBA conducted an analysis of the student population, and the availability and suitability of training facilities. VBA has successfully implemented Challenge training at the VBA training academy in the past, while assuring standardization of training because we travel nationally standardized instructors to the academy, and provide close oversight by Compensation Service course managers. The analysis revealed:

- The student population is spread across several regional offices. The student population requires training in one of two curricula.

- Sending all employees to a VBA facility significantly decreases costs associated with training space as the VBA facility can adequately accommodate the number of trainees and support staff.

(2) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable classroom equipment including computers connected to the VBA network and already loaded with relevant computer applications.

(3) The Compensation Services Training Facility is one of our premier Challenge training locations because of the benefits of scale and the experienced support infrastructure at the Academy. Approximately 100 Challenge students can be accommodated simultaneously, and instructor standardization oversight can be accomplished across multiple classrooms by a single course manager for each curriculum. Using the Academy leverages the sunk costs of our established training facility.

b. Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) Other versions of this training – including shorter, in-person classes and a piloted, web-based class – have not proven to effectively meet the training goals and objectives based on measured production and accuracy results. Face-to-face Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(2) Our analysis concludes that the distributed model for face-to-face training effectively constrains costs and provides substantial return on the investment.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| October 13, 2015 to November 20, 2015 | Compensation Services Training Facility, Denver, CO. |

a. The training session will occur with:

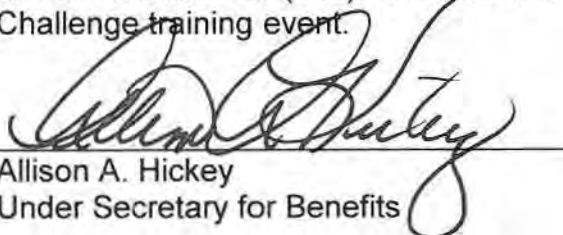
- 118 participants
 - 100 students and 18 instructors based in Denver
- 100 participants will travel to the Compensation Services Training Facility:
 - o 47 VSRs – class travel dates – 10/13/2015 to 11/20/2015
 - o 53 RVSRs – class travel dates – 10/26/2015 to 11/20/2015

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Expected costs are for student, instructor, and support staff travel, and for classroom supplies. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. Estimated airfares, local transportation costs and supplies are included in the estimate. No "logo", SWAG, food, light refreshments, or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| VSR Class | 47 | 47 | \$534,000 | \$534,000 | |
| RVSR Class | 53 | 53 | \$418,000 | \$418,000 | |
| Denver Instructors | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total | 118 | 100 | \$952,000 | \$952,000 | \$8,067 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


 Allison A. Hickey
 Under Secretary for Benefits

9/17/15
 Date

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: September 14, 2015

From: Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2015-6-d St. Paul Training in FY 2016

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training classes in October 2015 through November 2015. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.
 - a. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)
 1. The execution of this conference is subject to the availability of FY 16 funds. If FY 16 funds are not available, this request will be canceled
 2. Comparative analysis for venue and cost have been conducted
 3. Conference participation is limited to required attendees
 4. This conference is necessary for the training of 82 VBA Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs)
2. Purpose: The Challenge program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training accelerates by six months the achievement of journey-level status of Challenge graduates. It is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.
3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:
 - Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy;

4. Justification:

a. Challenge training accelerates proficiency in new employees.

(1) Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. Upon completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.

(2) VBA normally conducts this training in a centralized model. Challenge 2015-6 is proposed in a distributed model to increase training capacity and constrain costs while preserving the emphasis on building proficiency.

b. Face-to-face Challenge training is required for effective student and instructor interaction.

(1) Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Challenge training has achieved dramatic results due to the adult learning principles built into the training methods.

(3) The personnel selected as instructors are highly experienced, journey-level employees, recommended by their regional office leaders and prepared with standardized training provided by Compensation Service. In the face-to-face Challenge training environment, the instructors gain substantial practice in teaching difficult topics and guiding the work effort of others.

(4) Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above, and because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) VBA conducted an analysis of the student population, and the availability and suitability of training facilities. VBA has successfully implemented Challenge training at the VBA training academy in the past, while assuring standardization of training because we travel nationally standardized instructors to the academy, and provide close oversight by Compensation Service course managers. The analysis revealed:

- The student population is spread across several regional offices. The student population requires training in one of two curricula.
- Sending all employees to a VBA facility significantly decreases costs associated with training space as the VBA facility can adequately accommodate the number of trainees and support staff.

(2) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable classroom equipment including computers connected to the VBA network and already loaded with relevant computer applications.

(3) The Compensation Services Training Facility is one of our premier Challenge training locations because of the benefits of scale and the experienced support infrastructure at the Academy. Approximately 82 Challenge students can be accommodated simultaneously, and instructor standardization oversight can be accomplished across multiple classrooms by a single course manager for each curriculum. Using the Academy leverages the sunk costs of our established training facility.

b. Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) Other versions of this training – including shorter, in-person classes and a piloted, web-based class – have not proven to effectively meet the training goals and objectives based on measured production and accuracy results. Face-to-face Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(2) Our analysis concludes that the distributed model for face-to-face training effectively constrains costs and provides substantial return on the investment.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|--|---|
| October 13, 2015 to November 20, 2015 | VA Regional Office St Paul, MN SEATTLE, WA |

a. The training session will occur with:

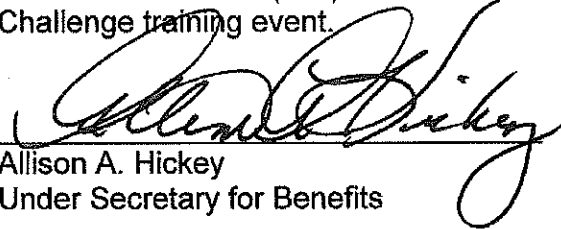
- 98 participants
 - 82 students and 16 instructors
- 98 participants will travel to the Compensation Services Training Facility:
 - o 82 VSRs – class travel dates – 10/13/2015 to 11/20/2015
 - o 16 instructors – class travel dates – 10/13/2015 to 11/20/2015

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Expected costs are for student, instructor, and support staff travel, and for classroom supplies. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. Estimated fares, local transportation costs and supplies are included in the estimate. No "logo", SWAG, food, light refreshments, or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| VSR Class | 82 | 82 | \$765,260 | \$765,260 | |
| Instructors | 16 | 16 | \$150,740 | \$150,740 | |
| Total | 98 | 98 | \$916,000 | \$916,000 | \$9,346 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


Allison A. Hickey
Under Secretary for Benefits

9/17/15
Date

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: **FEB 24 2016**

From: Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2016-4 Training in FY 2016

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training class. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.
2. Purpose: The Challenge training program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) or Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.
3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:
 - Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy
 - Newly hired Rating Veterans Service Representatives will demonstrate mastery by rating at least one simple (one-to-two issue) claim per day at 90% accuracy
4. Justification:
 - a. Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. Upon completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.
 - b. Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable equipment including computers connected to the VBA network that are loaded with relevant computer applications.

(2) Compensation Service's training facilities are VBA's premier Challenge training locations because of our experienced support infrastructure and cost savings realized at each Academy location.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| April 11, 2016 to May 20, 2016 | Compensation Services Training Facility, Baltimore, MD. |

a. The training session will occur with:


- 230 participants (2003 students and 30 Instructors based in Baltimore)
- 200 participants will travel to the Compensation Services Training Facility

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. No "logo", SWAG, food, light refreshments, or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| VSR Class | 100 | 100 | \$1,076,500 | \$1,076,500 | |
| RVSR Class | 100 | 100 | \$1,076,500 | \$1,076,500 | |
| Baltimore Instructors | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total | 230 | 200 | \$2,153,000 | \$2,153,000 | \$9,360 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


Danny G.I. Pummill (SES)
Acting Under Secretary for Benefits
Veterans Benefits Administration

FEB 24 2016

Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: MAR 28 2016

From: Under Secretary for Health

Subj: Request Waiver to Conduct MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775)

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with existing Department of Veterans Affairs conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Office of ADUSH for Quality, Safety and Value requests a waiver to conduct MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775) in fiscal year 2016.
2. Purpose: The primary purpose of the conference is to develop and sustain knowledge in coordinating services pertaining to clients' complex operational needs. The secondary purpose of the conference is to gain understanding in deploying methods and opportunities to change operational communications through improvements in contextual analyses. A third purpose of this conference is for the ADUSH for Quality, Safety and Value to promote administrative awareness among employees in the Department, especially VHA.
3. Goals and Objectives: The conference will improve the VHA service capability by enhancing capabilities among staff and reinforcing the value of contextual analyses through in-person cooperation among colleagues. The conference will also enhance the quality of services to Veterans by preparing and encouraging staff to apply their improved understanding to policies and other conditions affecting complex operations in VHA. The face-to-face conference will help VHA staff clarify and coordinate future requirements that ADUSH for Quality, Safety and Value is promoting in employees with the goal of improving operational procedures across major work functions.
4. Justification: The conference requires extended, uninterrupted episodes of face-to-face engagement to sustain attention on complex administrative factors and conditions affecting customers. The content of the conference is consistent with goals of VA and VHA, as it will include an extensive set of peer-to-peer presentations that concentrate on necessary designs, methods, and professional requirements for improving executive governance and overall employee engagement. The conference is required by attendees to fully support their professional development to meet federal standards for full participation in the mission of VA and its growth of performance capability. Lodging taxes are included in estimated costs even if the Federal Government is tax-exempt in selected locations because all travelers attending the conference may not hold a government issued travel card. All travelers will have completed mandatory travel card and ethics training as required by VHA.

Subj: Request Approval to Implement MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775)

5. **Business Case Analysis:** The proposed conference, MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775), beginning on 2016-04-11 and ending on 2016-04-14 will be held in Denver / Aurora, CO and include 450 VA personnel of which 450 will be air travelers, at a total estimated cost of \$834,696.00. The estimated cost per attendee is \$1,854.88. The non-travel costs of \$44,550 will cover the expenses for audio/visual equipment and training materials. The travel dates are 2016-04-10 returning 2016-04-14. The value of the event to the VA mission is that it will reinforce vital Veteran services; as well as reinforce understanding in deploying contextual analyses of the operational conditions affecting such services. The value of the training event cannot be achieved through teleconferencing or video-conferencing because of the required interactions to achieve sustained concentration on collegial exchange of knowledge. Detailed market cost research was conducted on three potential locations. The location selected was determined to offer the VA the best value, especially with regard to its travel costs and travel proximity. Virtual options do not meet all educational requirements.

6. The proposed dates and location are:

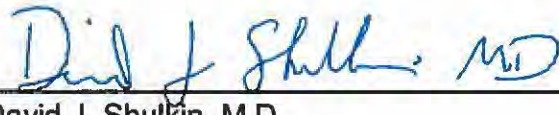
| Dates | Potential Location |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 04/11/2016 - 04/14/2016 | Denver / Aurora, CO |

7. The overall proposed per event cost estimate is provided below:

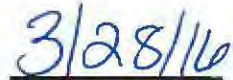
| | Number of employees | Support Staff/VA Faculty | Non-Travel Cost | Travel Cost | Contractor Support | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|--|---------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775) | 450 | 20 Support/ 25 Faculty out of 450 Employees | \$44,550.00 | \$790,146.00 | \$0.00 | \$834,696.00 | \$1,854.88 |

Subj: Request Waiver to Conduct MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775)

8. The Responsible Conference Executive (RCE) for this event is Heather Woodward-Hagg, Acting National Program Director, Veterans Engineering Resource Centers (VERCs), and is available at (317) 430-5613 should you wish to further discuss the proposed MyVA Access Action Kick-Off (40269 / BIS 1775).



David J. Shulkin, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health



Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: **AUG 12 2016**

From: Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (006)

Subj: Request Waiver for Senior Leaders Annual Conference, September 12-15, 2016
(VAIQ 7711508)

To: Secretary (00)

1. In accordance with existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Office of Human Resources and Administration requests your waiver to implement a Senior Leaders Annual Conference (SLAC) in fiscal year (FY) 2016.

2. Purpose: The Office of Human Resources and Administration is conducting a Senior Leaders Annual Conference that will support the implementation of the Secretary's vision to improve the leadership capabilities of VA Leaders to professionally develop employees across the agency. The attendees at the Secretary's Senior Leaders conference include VACO Administration, Facility Directors, and Staff senior leaders who were invited to the previous Leader Developing Leaders Sessions in September and December 2015, and May 2016.

3. Goals and Objectives: VA Senior Leaders will attend a 3 1/2 day long facilitated Senior Leaders Annual Conference to be held in Leesburg VA. The goals and objectives include coaching and mentoring frontline leaders and ensuring leaders across VA are aligned/aligning their part of the VA enterprise with the Secretary's vision and VA goals and objectives.

4. Event information: The total estimated cost for the Senior Leaders Annual Conference is \$1,071,530.50 (or \$1,948.24 per participant). The figures include estimated cost for instructors, materials, meals, staff support, travel, shuttle service and administrative costs. The table below is provided as an overall cost estimate. For additional details, please see the conference cost spreadsheet attached to the VA Form 10008a at Tab 3. Travel dates are September 11 and September 15, 2016.

| Date | Event | Potential Location | # VA Employees | Support Staff |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| September 12-15, 2016 | SLAC | Leesburg, VA | 548 | 2 |
| Non-travel cost | Travel Cost | Contractor Support | Total cost | Cost per Participant |
| \$40,500.00 | \$1,010,421.50 | \$20,609.00 | \$1,071,530.50 | \$1,948.24 |

Subject: Request Waiver For September 12-15, 2016 Senior Leaders Annual Conference (VAIQ 711508)

5. Justification: The proposal details the reasons that a face to face meeting is required to accomplish the goals and objectives. It overcomes the presumption that a face to face meeting is not necessary. All alternative means have been considered and are determined to be insufficient for achieving the stated purpose, goals and objectives. (See Appendix F of VA Financial Policies and Procedures Conference Planning, Vol XIV, Chapter 10, Nov 2011).

6. Business Case Analysis:

- a) Since the 2010 Senior Leader Annual Conference there have been significant changes in leadership and vision across the Department. The Secretary envisions reviewing our progress in 2016, documenting lessons learned, celebrating successes and renewing our commitment to complete VA's transformation.
- b) This conference will involve leaders from across the Department who will share their experiences, ideas, and insights. The attendees will plan the way forward to maintain and sustain our success, while focusing on fundamental skills developed in 2016 that are critical to our success moving forward. Ultimately, this will inspire leaders and employees across the Department to provide the best possible service to our Veterans.
- c) Key requirements for the venue will include adequate classroom and breakout space, nearby lodging at the government rate, and the ability to provide meals for working lunches and dinners. All of this will maximize training time for the participants and minimize training distractions.
 - 1) Venue: VALU, in coordination with CSEMO, has taken all appropriate measures to deliver this Training Event at less cost to the taxpayer. The following is a review of the three potential training sites (please refer to VA Form 10008b, Site Cost Comparison Chart, with attachment).

| Facility | Location | Distance from VACO |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| The National Conference Center | Leesburg, VA | 35 miles/50 minutes |
| VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) | Frederick, MD | 48 miles/60 minutes |
| The Bolger Center | Potomac, MD | 18 miles/30 minutes |

Subject: Request Waiver For September 12-15, 2016 Senior Leaders Annual Conference (VAIQ 711508)

- 2) Ownership: The United States Postal Service operates the Bolger Center. The VA operates the VAAA. Lastly, the National Conference Center (NCC) is privately owned.
 - 3) Space: Two of the facilities were deemed adequate for space. The National Conference Center and Bolger Center meet the requirements for on-site accommodations and meals. VAAA does not have the adequate spacing to accommodate the program.
 - 4) Lodging: Bolger and the NCC offer on-site lodging at the respective local per diem rates. As the NCC is in Loudon County, VA the allowable per diem rates is less than that of Bolger, in Montgomery County, MD. The VAAA does not offer overnight accommodations; however, nearby hotels make lodging possible for participants to travel to and from the training site. However, we anticipate additional transportation costs. For lodging, we priced the Hilton Garden Inn, by Marriott in Frederick, MD at \$108.00 per night with tax per participant.
 - 5) Meals: Bolger and the NCC provide meals on site as part of their conference package providing the flexibility needed for the rigorous schedule which will require working lunches or dinners. VAAA has a canteen operation somewhat similar to VACO's, which offers some in-house meals paid individually, or we would need to contract with an outside caterer. We priced meals with local caterer at \$9,500 for the week. Bolger and NCC charge non-lodging participants \$71 and \$61, respectively, to cover meals, parking and other services.
- d. Recommended Venue: Based on the market research, we recommend using the National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA as the best value for the money. Having all of services offered on campus at an all-inclusive, GSA schedule rate offers affordability and maximizes the participant training time.
 - e. Past Performance: LDL held three Sessions at NCC and found the performance of the staff and facilities satisfactory and supportive of the course objectives. Overall feedback from the senior executive participants was positive.
 - f. Travel Expenses: NCC's relative proximity to VACO and Dulles International Airport eases the commute for VA participants.
 - g. Break Service: Bolger and NCC provide light snacks for morning and afternoon breaks at no additional charge. VAAA offers their canteen on an individual case basis.

Subject: Request Waiver For September 12-15, 2016 Senior Leaders Annual Conference (VAIQ 711508)

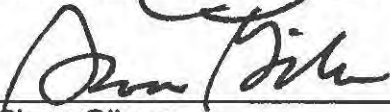
7. If you need additional information, the VALU POC for this package is David Austin at 202-632-7919.



Meghan S. Flanz
Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources
and Administration

8/1/16
Date

Recommend: ☒ Approve ☐ Disapprove



Sloan Gibson
Deputy Secretary

8/12/16
Date

Recommend: ☒ Approve ☐ Disapprove



Robert A. McDonald
Secretary

8/12/16
Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: FEB 11, 2016

From: Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Approval to Implement VBA/VHA: Improving the Compensation and Pension (C&P) Exam Process Training (April 11-15, 2016)

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, Compensation Service requests your approval to implement the VBA/VHA: Improving the C&P Exam Process Training.

a. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

- 1) Conference participation is limited to required attendees
- 2) This conference is necessary to identify, discuss, and improve quality service for customers.

2. Purpose: The purpose of this training is to identify, discuss, and improve quality service for our customers around the C&P exam process. The training will provide the opportunity to hear from the leaders driving the effort to improve Veterans' experience with the C&P examination process. The speakers will focus on the multiple efforts executed to date across the nation, the outcomes of those efforts, and next steps. Additional sessions will focus on improving the quality of service, discussing methodology on how to provide improved service while reducing the claims backlog and appointment wait times, and observing and participating in new ideology and techniques for helping Veterans move through the C&P examination process. This training will also provide communication opportunities and information sharing of new and revised techniques and procedures with participants who attend the training.

3. Goals and Objectives: VA's goal is to significantly improve Veterans' experience, focused on the experience around the C&P examination process. In December 2015, the Secretary established 12 Breakthrough Initiatives to improve the experience for Veterans. This training conference will bring all the leadership from VBA and VHA field offices together to hear about the ongoing efforts to improve the experience and provide details on how the various initiatives can be deployed at each of their home offices. After the conference, all attendees will have an understanding of the Secretary's vision. Attendees will be able to provide feedback and have discussions with each other about the initiative and what they will look like when implemented at the local level. The primary audience for this training will be VBA Veterans Service Center Managers, Regional Office (RO) Directors, and VHA Compensation and Pension examiners.

VBA/VHA: Improving the C&P Exam Process (April 04-08, 2016)

4. Justification: This training conference is required to provide training which focuses on quality service, improved methodologies for providing service, reducing the claims backlog, reducing appointment wait times, and observing and participating in new ideology and techniques for the C&P exam process.

This training will help VA meet the goal of reaching 90% agreement with the statement "I trust VA to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans." Additionally, this training will allow face-to-face interaction with Veterans Service Center Managers, RO Directors, and C&P examiners, who hail from different regional offices and medical centers. This interaction will identify and improve the quality skills for our customers.

The face-to-face interaction is required in order to achieve the interaction described above. All alternative means have been considered and are determined to be insufficient for achieving the stated purpose, goals, and objectives.

5. Business Case Analysis: Costs are effectively constrained.

The Atlanta Marietta Hotel and Conference Center is located within close proximity to the Atlanta RO, as well as the airport. The Atlanta RO has been selected as the host as it is near the location of the VBA/VHA: Improving the C&P Exam Training. The Atlanta Marietta Hotel and Conference Center will provide conference spaces at no additional charge.

Additionally, the Atlanta RO will be available to provide both technical and logistical support for the training.

6. The proposed dates and location are:

| DATE | POTENTIAL LOCATION |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 11-15 April 2016 | Atlanta, GA |

a. The VBA/VHA: Improving the C&P Exam Process Training Session will occur with:

- 500 participants who will travel to Atlanta, GA
 - 150 VBA employees travel dates – 04/11/2016 – 04/15/2016
 - 350 VHA employees travel dates - 04/11/2016 – 04/15/2016

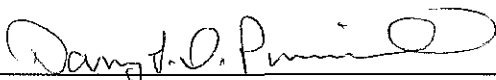
No "logos" SWAG, food, light refreshments or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

VBA/VHA: Improving the C&P Exam Process (April 04-08, 2016)

7. The overall proposed per event cost estimate is provided below:

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Support staff | Non- Travel Cost | Travel Cost | Contractor Support | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| VBA | 150 | 0 | 0 | 335,000 | \$32,000 (AV Equipment) | \$367,000 | \$2,446 |
| VHA | 350 | 0 | 0 | \$781,000 | 0 | \$781,000 | \$2,231 |
| Total | 500 | 0 | 0 | \$1,115,000 | \$32,000 | \$1,147,000 | \$2,294 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed training event.



Danny G.I. Pummill
Acting Under Secretary for Benefits
Veterans Benefits Administration

11 Feb 16
Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: July 27, 2015

From: Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) (007)

Subj: Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1601 in-residence
October 5 – November 27, 2015

To: Secretary (00)

Thru: Deputy Secretary (001)

1. In accordance with existing VA policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, OSP requests your approval of a waiver to conduct the VA Basic Police Officer Courses (VA BPOC) Class Number 1601, in-residence October 5 – November 27, 2015.

2. **Purpose:** The VA BPOC training is critical to preparing newly hired VA Police officers to serve at our medical centers nationwide. VA Police officers are expected to provide professional law enforcement services in a VA healthcare environment. The VA Law Enforcement Training Center (LETC) is the only Federal provider for that type of specialized law enforcement training. The VA BPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario and role play-based training which must be delivered face-to-face. Subjects include small arms training and qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon (Oleo Capsicum Resin) and a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importance is the 40 hours of behavioral science training VA Police officers receive which teach officers how to use verbal communications skills to de-escalate violent situations. Moreover, the VA LETC is highly regarded as it received Federal Law Enforcement accreditation in November 2011 from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation board (FLETA). LETC was praised by FLETA for an intense behavioral curriculum.

3. **Goals and Objectives:** Upon graduation from the VA BPOC newly assigned VA Police officers will:

- a. Have completed certification requirements to be appointed and serve as a VA Police officer in accordance with Federal law, Title 38, U.S.C., Section 902.
- b. Respond to and control various calls for service such as, active shooter, workplace violence, disturbances, customer service/assistance, etc.
- c. The training includes demonstration/performance training objectives as well as lecture.
 - The event is being conducted on government property which will eliminate the cost of training space and reduce lodging costs.
 - There are no outside presenters; all training is provided by LETC faculty.
 - This is strictly a training event with no entertainments, etc.
 - No food or refreshments are being provided.
 - There are no expenses for SWAG of any kind. This is a training event.
 - There are no non-VA employees attending this training.

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1601 in-residence
October 5 – November 27, 2015

- Actual total costs will be reported within 15 days of completion of the training event.
- An After Action Report (AAR) will be provided after the conclusion of the training event.

4. Justification:

a. Face-to-face, performance based skills training is necessary for the complex skills required as a police officer.

(1) VA Police officers are required by Title 38, U.S.C., Section 902, to receive specialized training with particular emphasis on dealing in situations involving patients and other training as prescribed by SECVA. The VA LETC is the authorized provider of this specialized training.

(2) The 320 hour (8 week) BPOC provides VA Police officers with specialized training in Federal law enforcement and prepares them with the ability to deal with Veterans inflicted by traumatic brain injury (TBI), Post-traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal/homicidal ideations, and other critical crisis intervention and verbal de-escalation skills and techniques unique to a healthcare environment.

(3) Weapons and physical skills training and certification cannot be delivered through any other method. Weapon and physical skills training include but are not limited to: firearms, straight baton, OC spray, ground defense and recovery, defensive tactics, and graded practical (scenario-based) exercises.

b. Face-to-face training at the LETC ensures quality training by certified instructors, who deliver material developed by subject matter experts.

(1) The LETC Behavioral Sciences curricula was developed in concert with leading VA experts in TBI, PTSD and dealing with suicidal/homicidal veterans.

(2) VA LETC instructors undergo a formal instructor development course for initial and recurring certification.

(3) VA LETC instructors regularly attend technical and professional enhancement training as part of their annual Individual Development Plan. This training is specific to the skills and advanced knowledge required of our specialties in a healthcare environment.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. VA BPOC costs are effectively constrained.

(1) The VA LETC is a franchise fund enterprise center which is commissioned to provide services to Federal customers. No other Federal training center has a program tailored to the unique needs of law enforcement in a healthcare environment.

(2) The tuition for the BPOC includes all meals and lodging. The LETC contracts meals with vendors and houses BPOC students on-station, at a 45 percent reduction as compared to local lodging and per-diem rates. Specifically, our lodging and meal cost per-student is \$4,648 for 56 nights. At local GSA rates the per-student cost would be \$8,227. The overall savings is \$214,740.00 per class.

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1601 in-residence
October 5 – November 27, 2015

(3) Our facility is located on the grounds of the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) and we have an agreement with CAVHS at a cost of \$7.09 per square foot versus the average GSA space lease of \$16.00 to \$30.00 per square foot, annually. This results in an approximate annual savings of \$1 Million to \$2.5 Million annually.

b. VA BPOC provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) All VA Police officers must successfully complete the BPOC before receiving their badge and credentials or being certified/authorized to perform any law enforcement duties. The knowledge, skills and abilities of a VA BPOC graduate are significantly increased when compared against a newly hired VA Police officer who has not attended the course. A newly hired and untrained VA Police officer in the GS-0083 job series costs VHA tens of thousands of dollars in overtime, salaries and benefits, as the department cannot use the untrained officer to protect VA persons and properties, or perform any type of law enforcement duties until they successfully complete BPOC. The high quality, specialized training VA BPOC graduates receive, allows them to provide professional law enforcement and security services to protect and support the Veterans, staff, visitors, and infrastructures on VA property.

(2) As indicated in paragraph 4, face-to-face, performance-based skills training is necessary for the complex skills required as a VA Police officer. The VA BPOC training provides a unique, cost effective, and substantial return on the investment.

c. Impact on VHA & LETC if classes are not held.

(1) As a franchise fund enterprise center, the LETC receives no appropriated budget and rely on our training services and administrative product lines to meet expenses.

(2) VHA would not be able to ensure a safe and secure environment for Veterans, employees, contractors, and visitors at VHA healthcare facilities.

(3) If we are unable to continue to provide these services, we face the possibility of having to: (a) Discontinue sending instructors to certification or other professional enhancement training; (b) Cancel efforts to attain/maintain FLETA accreditation for programs or academy (This effort requires travel funds to support required processes); (c) Initiate a reduction in force, if unable to meet salary obligations; and (d) Potential of violating support contracts required to provide services and maintain facilities.

6. The proposed dates and location for the VA BPOC class is:

VA BPOC 1601

| No. | Date | Location of Training |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | October 5, 2015 to November 27, 2015 | VA Law Enforcement Training Center 2200 Fort Roots Dr. North Little Rock, AR 72114 |

The VA BPOC Class Number 1601 will have:

- 76 participants
 - 60 students and
 - 14 instructors, 2 OSLE employees = 16

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1601 in-residence
October 5 – November 27, 2015

7. All are VA employees and all training is conducted on government property.

Total Cost for VA BPOC 1601 Class = \$750,000.00

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Students / OSLE + (Instructors/Support)

| VABPOC Class # 1601 | Participants (60 Students) | Instructors & Support (all costs captured in tuition) + 2 OSLE participants | Estimated Travel Cost (60 Students) plus 2 OSLE participants | Tuition (Includes all meals/lodging/staf f salaries/facilities and ground transportation) | Total Travel Cost & Tuition Cost | Avg. Cost per Students + 2 OSLE Participants |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| | 60 | 14 | \$90,000 | \$657,000 | \$747,000 | \$12,450.00 |
| | | 2 | \$3,000 | 0 | \$3,000 | \$1,500.00 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-4980 if you wish to further discuss this proposed training event.


Kevin T. Hanretta
Assistant Secretary - OSP
VAIQ: 7623098

8/14/2015
Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: July 29, 2015

From: Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) (007)

Subj: Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1602 in-residence
October 26 – December 18, 2015

To: Secretary (00)

Thru: Deputy Secretary (001)

1. In accordance with existing VA policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, OSP requests your approval of a waiver to conduct the VA Basic Police Officer Courses (VA BPOC) Class Number 1602, in-residence October 26 – December 18, 2015.

2. **Purpose:** The VA BPOC training is critical to preparing newly hired VA Police officers to serve at our medical centers nationwide. VA Police officers are expected to provide professional law enforcement services in a VA healthcare environment. The VA Law Enforcement Training Center (LETC) is the only Federal provider for that type of specialized law enforcement training. The VA BPOC includes dynamic, intense, scenario and role play-based training which must be delivered face-to-face. Subjects include small arms training and qualification, defensive tactics, ground defense, expandable straight baton, chemical weapon (Oleo Capsicum Resin) and a myriad of other subjects which rely on physical skills. Of great importance is the 40 hours of behavioral science training VA Police officers receive which teach officers how to use verbal communications skills to de-escalate violent situations. Moreover, the VA LETC is highly regarded as it received Federal Law Enforcement accreditation in November 2011 from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation board (FLETA). LETC was praised by FLETA for an intense behavioral curriculum.

3. **Goals and Objectives:** Upon graduation from the VA BPOC newly assigned VA Police officers will:

- a. Have completed certification requirements to be appointed and serve as a VA Police officer in accordance with Federal law, Title 38, U.S.C., Section 902.
- b. Respond to and control various calls for service such as, active shooter, workplace violence, disturbances, customer service/assistance, etc.
- c. The training includes demonstration/performance training objectives as well as lecture.
 - The event is being conducted on government property which will eliminate the cost of training space and reduce lodging costs.
 - There are no outside presenters; all training is provided by LETC faculty.
 - This is strictly a training event with no entertainments, etc.
 - No food or refreshments are being provided.
 - There are no expenses for SWAG of any kind. This is a training event.
 - There are no non-VA employees attending this training.

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1602 in-residence
October 26 – December 18, 2015

- Actual total costs will be reported within 15 days of completion of the training event.
- An After Action Report (AAR) will be provided after the conclusion of the training event.

4. **Justification:**

a. **Face-to-face, performance based skills training is necessary for the complex skills required as a police officer.**

(1) VA Police officers are required by Title 38, U.S.C., Section 902, to receive specialized training with particular emphasis on dealing in situations involving patients and other training as prescribed by SECVA. The VA LETC is the authorized provider of this specialized training.

(2) The 320 hour (8 week) BPOC provides VA Police officers with specialized training in Federal law enforcement and prepares them with the ability to deal with Veterans inflicted by traumatic brain injury (TBI), Post-traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal/homicidal ideations, and other critical crisis intervention and verbal de-escalation skills and techniques unique to a healthcare environment.

(3) Weapons and physical skills training and certification cannot be delivered through any other method. Weapon and physical skills training include but are not limited to: firearms, straight baton, OC spray, ground defense and recovery, defensive tactics, and graded practical (scenario-based) exercises.

b. **Face-to-face training at the LETC ensures quality training by certified instructors, who deliver material developed by subject matter experts.**

(1) The LETC Behavioral Sciences curricula was developed in concert with leading VA experts in TBI, PTSD and dealing with suicidal/homicidal veterans.

(2) VA LETC instructors undergo a formal instructor development course for initial and recurring certification.

(3) VA LETC instructors regularly attend technical and professional enhancement training as part of their annual Individual Development Plan. This training is specific to the skills and advanced knowledge required of our specialties in a healthcare environment.

5. **Business Case Analysis:**

a. **VA BPOC costs are effectively constrained.**

(1) The VA LETC is a franchise fund enterprise center which is commissioned to provide services to Federal customers. No other Federal training center has a program tailored to the unique needs of law enforcement in a healthcare environment.

(2) The tuition for the BPOC includes all meals and lodging. The LETC contracts meals with vendors and houses BPOC students on-station, at a 45 percent reduction as compared to local lodging and per-diem rates. Specifically, our lodging and meal cost per-student is \$4,648 for 56 nights. At local GSA rates the per-student cost would be \$8,227. The overall savings is ~~\$214,740.00~~ per class.

257,688.00

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1602 in-residence
October 26 – December 18, 2015

(3) Our facility is located on the grounds of the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) and we have an agreement with CAVHS at a cost of \$7.09 per square foot versus the average GSA space lease of \$16.00 to \$30.00 per square foot, annually. This results in an approximate annual savings of \$1 Million to \$2.5 Million annually.

b. VA BPOC provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) All VA Police officers must successfully complete the BPOC before receiving their badge and credentials or being certified/authorized to perform any law enforcement duties. The knowledge, skills and abilities of a VA BPOC graduate are significantly increased when compared against a newly hired VA Police officer who has not attended the course. A newly hired and untrained VA Police officer in the GS-0083 job series costs VHA tens of thousands of dollars in overtime, salaries and benefits, as the department cannot use the untrained officer to protect VA persons and properties, or perform any type of law enforcement duties until they successfully complete BPOC. The high quality, specialized training VA BPOC graduates receive, allows them to provide professional law enforcement and security services to protect and support the Veterans, staff, visitors, and infrastructures on VA property.

(2) As indicated in paragraph 4, face-to-face, performance-based skills training is necessary for the complex skills required as a VA Police officer. The VA BPOC training provides a unique, cost effective, and substantial return on the investment.

c. Impact on VHA & LETC if classes are not held.

(1) As a franchise fund enterprise center, the LETC receives no appropriated budget and rely on our training services and administrative product lines to meet expenses.

(2) VHA would not be able to ensure a safe and secure environment for Veterans, employees, contractors, and visitors at VHA healthcare facilities.

(3) If we are unable to continue to provide these services, we face the possibility of having to: (a) Discontinue sending instructors to certification or other professional enhancement training; (b) Cancel efforts to attain/maintain FLETA accreditation for programs or academy (This effort requires travel funds to support required processes); (c) Initiate a reduction in force, if unable to meet salary obligations; and (d) Potential of violating support contracts required to provide services and maintain facilities.

6. The proposed dates and location for the VA BPOC class is:

VA BPOC 1602

| No. | Date | Location of Training |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 | October 26, 2015 to December 18, 2015 | VA Law Enforcement Training Center 2200 Fort Roots Dr. North Little Rock, AR 72114 |

The VA BPOC Class Number 1602 will have:

- ~~76~~ participants
88 o ~~60~~ students and
o 14 instructors, 2 OSLE employees = 16

Request Waiver for The VA Basic Police Officer Course, Class Number 1602 in-residence
October 26 – December 18, 2015

7. All are VA employees and all training is conducted on government property.

Total Cost for VA BPOC 1602 Class = \$750,000.00

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Students / OSLE + (Instructors/Support)

| VABPOC Class # 1602 | Participants (60 Students) | Instructors & Support (all costs captured in tuition) + 2 OSLE participants | Estimated Travel Cost (60 Students) plus 2 OSLE participants | Tuition (Includes all meals/lodging/staf f salaries/facilities and ground transportation) | Total Travel Cost & Tuition Cost | Avg. Cost per Students + 2 OSLE Participants |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| | 72 -60 | 14 | 108,584 \$90,000 | 788,400 \$657,000 | 896,984 \$747,000 | \$12,450.00 |
| | | 2 | 3,016 \$3,000 | 0 | 3016 \$3,000 | \$1,500.00 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-4980 if you wish to further discuss this proposed training event.

Kevin T. Hanretta
Kevin T. Hanretta
Assistant Secretary - OSP
VAIQ: 7624967

8/14/2015
Date

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: APRIL 15, 2016

From: Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2016-5 Training in FY 2016

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training class. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.

2. Purpose: The Challenge training program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) or Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.

3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:

- Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy;
- Newly hired Rating Veterans Service Representatives will demonstrate mastery by rating at least one simple (one-to-two issue) claim per day at 90% accuracy

4. Justification:

a. Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. On completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.

b. Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable classroom equipment including computers connected to the VBA network and already loaded with relevant computer applications.

(2) The Compensation Service's Training Facility is one of VBA's premier Challenge training locations because of the experienced support infrastructure and cost savings.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|---------------------------------|--|
| May 31, 2016 to July 8, 2016 | Compensation Service's Training Facility, Denver, CO |

a. The training session will occur with:

- 121 participants (100 students and 3 support staff, and 18 Instructors)
- 103 participants will travel to the Compensation Service's Training Facility

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. No "logo", SWAG, food, light refreshments, or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Support Staff | 3 | 3 | \$34,065 | \$34,065 | |
| VSR Class | 50 | 50 | \$567,751 | \$567,751 | |
| RVSR Class | 50 | 50 | \$394,500 | \$394,500 | |
| Instructors | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total | 121 | 103 | \$996,316 | \$996,316 | \$8,234 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


Danny G.I. Pummill

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: November 16, 2015

From: Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2016-3 Training in FY 2016

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training classes in February 2016 to April 2016. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.
 - a. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)
 1. Comparative analysis for venue and cost have been conducted
 2. Conference participation is limited to required attendees
 3. This conference is necessary for the training of 113 VBA Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) and 100 Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs)
2. Purpose: The Challenge program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) or Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training accelerates by six months the achievement of journey-level status of Challenge graduates. It is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.
3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:
 - Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy;
 - Newly hired Rating Veterans Service Representatives will demonstrate mastery by rating at least one simple (one-to-two issue) claim per day at 90% accuracy

4. Justification:

a. Challenge training accelerates proficiency in new employees.

(1) Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. On completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.

(2) VBA normally conducts Challenge training in a centralized, distributed model to increase training capacity and constrain costs while preserving the emphasis on building proficiency.

b. Face-to-face Challenge training is required for effective student and instructor interaction.

(1) Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Challenge training has achieved dramatic results due to the adult learning principles built into the training methods.

(2) The personnel selected as instructors are highly experienced, journey-level employees, recommended by their regional office leaders and prepared with standardized training provided by Compensation Service. In the face-to-face Challenge training environment, the instructors gain substantial practice in teaching difficult topics and guiding the work effort of others.

(3) Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above, and because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) VBA conducted an analysis of the Baltimore Challenge student population, and the availability and suitability of training facilities. VBA has successfully implemented Challenge training in the past, while assuring standardization of training because we travel nationally standardized instructors to the academy, and provide close oversight by Compensation Service course managers. The analysis revealed:

- The student population is spread across several regional offices. The student population requires training in one of two curricula.
- Sending all employees to a VBA facility significantly decreases costs associated with training space as the VBA facility can adequately accommodate the number of trainees and support staff.

(2) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable classroom equipment including computers connected to the VBA network and already loaded with relevant computer applications.

(3) The Compensation Services Training Facility, Baltimore Maryland is one of our premier Challenge training locations because of the benefits of scale and the experienced support infrastructure. Approximately 200 Challenge students can be accommodated simultaneously, and instructor standardization oversight can be accomplished across multiple classrooms by a single course manager for each curriculum.

b. Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) Other versions of this training – including shorter, in-person classes and a piloted, web-based class – have not proven to effectively meet the training goals and objectives based on measured production and accuracy results. Face-to-face Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(2) Our analysis concludes that the distributed model for face-to-face training effectively constrains costs and provides substantial return on the investment.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|------------------------------------|---|
| February 22, 2016 to April 1, 2016 | Compensation Services Training Facility, Baltimore, MD. |

a. The training session will occur with:


- 258 participants
 - 213 students and 7 claims support staff, and 38 Instructors based in Baltimore
- 220 participants will travel to the Compensation Services Training Facility, Baltimore, MD:
 - o 7 personnel (7 claims support staff) support both the VSR and RVSR classes and travel from 02/22/16 to 04/1/16
 - o 113 VSRs – class travel dates – 02/22/16 to 04/1/16
 - o 100 RVSRs – class travel dates – 03/07/16 to 04/1/16

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Expected costs are for student, instructor, and support staff travel, and for classroom supplies. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. Estimated airfares, local transportation costs and supplies are included in the estimate. No “logo”, SWAG, food, light refreshments, or entertainment items or services will be purchased. All attendees will be informed that no per diem can be claimed for any meals provided at government expense.

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Support Staff | 7 | 7 | \$87,000 | \$87,000 | |
| VSR Class | 113 | 113 | \$1,209,000 | \$1,209,000 | |
| RVSR Class | 100 | 100 | \$730,000 | \$730,000 | |
| Baltimore Instructors | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total | 258 | 220 | \$2,026,000 | \$2,026,000 | \$7,853 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


 Danny G.I. Pummill (SES)
 Acting Under Secretary for Benefits
 Veterans Benefits Administration

11/16/15
 Date

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: April 1, 2015

From: Executive Director Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
(OSDBU) (00SB)

Subject: Waiver - 2015/2016 National Veterans Small Business Engagement (NVSBE)

To: Secretary (00)

1. Purpose:

a. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) requests your approval of a waiver to conduct the NVSBE in Pittsburgh, PA from November 14 - 20, 2015 and Minneapolis, MN from Oct 31-Nov 4, 2016. The estimated cost of NVSBE is \$2,364,872 and \$2,365,374 for 2015 and 2016 respectively.

2. Background:

- a) The NVSBE 2015 and 2016 are the fifth and sixth annual major events that provide Veteran-Owned Small Business Owners (VOSB) improved access to VA, Federal, and Commercial Procurement Decision Makers (PDM's). This event enables VA to clearly demonstrate its commitment to its priority goal of "Access" and its strategic objective of improving Veteran economic security.
- b) The National Veterans Small Business Engagement is part of VA outreach to Veteran-Owned Small Businesses in accordance with Public Law 95-507, the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, which defines procurement set-asides and provides maximum practicable opportunities in its acquisitions to small businesses. Under the authority of the Act, VA provides vendor counseling sessions, participates in events targeting the small business community and provides other training and business development outreach to small business owners. Public Law 106-50, the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999, expanded existing programs and provided new assistance programs for Veterans who own or operate small businesses. The law mandated that agencies provide information to Veteran-Owned firms on what each agency is purchasing or could purchase, and directs VA to expand outreach to educate Veterans not yet in business about self-employment opportunities.
- c) This waiver seeks approval for two year funding:
 - (1) Experience has shown that the best venue sites at the most economic value are reserved 2 to 3 years in advance. In the past, our selection of potential venues occurred less than 12 months in advance of the event which limited the availability of sites that would otherwise meet our criteria,

restricted the time required to plan the event, and in some instances would increase site fees and meeting space rentals.

- (2) Stakeholder feedback from both the federal and private sectors indicate that attendees need to know the location early on so they can plan their travel and expenses more effectively.
- (3) Announcing the sites two years out builds predictability and assists in the logistical planning such as, hotel group room blocks and PDM selection.
- (4) Traditionally the best pricing in hotels/venues are secured farther in advance of the event.

3. Goals and Objectives:

- a. The ultimate goal of the NVSBE is to enable procurement ready VOSBs to add value to the mission of the VA by providing the opportunity to learn about requirements and match capabilities necessary to compete effectively for procurement awards. The Engagement provides an opportunity for VOSBs to discuss potential opportunities with a large number of PDMs as well as with potential small and large business partners.
- b. In order for VA to meet its socioeconomic procurement goals, VA PDM's must be aware of VOSBs that can add value to VA missions, gain access to VOSBs to understand their capabilities in order to mitigate the perception of risk associated with doing business with a VOSB.
- c. This is the premier federal government event enabling Veteran-Owned Small Businesses to maximize opportunities to achieve the access needed to effectively compete for and win federal contracts.
- d. The 2014 NVSBE event hosted over 3,200 participants and offered the opportunity for VOSBs to connect with more than 375 PDMs from federal agencies and private industry at more than 2,800 "Direct Access" activities.
- e. The 2015 NVSBE will expand on the success of the previous events. We will monitor the return on investment for VA participants by managing the number of procurement-ready VOSB with which they can connect and refine the use of the Event Management Services Software (EMSS) that enables participants to enhance connections. In 2014, participants recorded more than 83,000 connections.

5. Business Case Analysis:

- a. **Cost Justification:** The total cost of the 2014 NVSBE was \$2,438,607.32. The pricing cost to VA includes air travel, lodging, per diem, travel voucher fees and registration fees.

- b. **No-Cost Implementation Contract:** The entire NVSBE contract will be implemented at no cost to the government. The majority of the planning will be done by our OSDBU internal federal and contractor team. The contract includes commercial marketing, registration, event logistics planning, and venue negotiations.
- c. **Number and Type of Attendees:** We seek to increase the value of VA investment by attracting more than 3,000 business participants to work with 350 VA officials, 100 officials from other federal agencies, and more than 60 commercial customers. We seek to increase return on investment by connecting PDMs who have opportunities (Buyers) with the VOSBs capabilities (Sellers) prior to the event so all participants can most effectively use their time at the event to have discussions with relevant partners.
- d. **Duration:** The NVSBE will last three days to enable participants to make more and better connections (travel costs are determined based on arrival the night before and staying the night on the last day of the conference). In addition to the primary objective of providing access, the event also enables VA agencies to conduct training for staff. In 2014, VHA reduced their training costs for VHA acquisition staff by taking advantage of their presence at these annual events to conduct training the day prior and after the conference.
- e. **Timing:** The 2015 NVSBE has been scheduled for the first quarter of the fiscal year (FY). Since our most critical asset for ensuring a beneficial event are the PDMs, OSDBU has listened and responded to the positive responses of the PDMs and continue to schedule the event during the first quarter.

Previously, the Engagement was held during the fourth quarter, but that caused the PDMs and those from other agencies difficulty in processing procurements before years' end. We also took into consideration when choosing event dates in 2014 and now 2015 the advice of the acquisition community to avoid the month of October as PDMs are consumed with year-end closeout activities. The proposed dates for 2015 and 2016 NVSBE do not conflict with holidays or other organizations holding events over the same time period in the convention centers and surrounding areas.

- f. **Major Activities:** We propose the following:
 - 1.) Business Opportunity Sessions (400)
 - 2.) Networking Receptions (2)
 - 3.) Exhibits (300)
 - 4.) Dining with Decision Maker networking sessions at Luncheons (1,200)
 - 5.) Networking Roundtables (1,800)
 - 6.) Executive Roundtables (5)
 - 7.) Senior Leader Roundtables (70)

8.) Learning Sessions to improve procurement readiness of VOSB (60)

9.) Workshops (VOSB/PDM) (3)

6. **Cost Mitigation Efforts:**

- a. Although our goal is to increase return on investment, rather than merely to reduce costs, we have undertaken a number of cost mitigation efforts. We are restricting attendance to VA PDMs with procurement opportunities that are relevant to firms beyond their local area. The use of no-cost contract for the NVSBE will spread costs across all participants. Event expenses covered under the no-cost contract are funded by hotel concessions, venue food and beverage guarantees, booth fees, sponsorships, and registration fees paid by all participants.

As a result, VA expenditures for the NVSBE are limited to travel and registration fees for VA participants, and exhibit fees for VA organizations. Other Cost Savings/Cost Avoidance measures follow:

- 1.) **SWAG:** There are no gifts, trinkets, memorabilia, or commemorative embossed items. Sponsors may provide items based on their sponsor package, at no cost to VA.
 - 2.) **Per Diem:** All federal government participants will be notified that they may not claim per diem for meals provided to them at the NVSBE.
 - 3.) **Food and Beverage:** The NVSBE contractor will stipulate that all provision of food and light refreshments will be in compliance with federal policy and regulations.
 - 4.) **Entertainment:** There will be no entertainment included in the NVSBE.
 - 5.) **Hotel Costs:** Event hotels are requested to provide rooms on a per diem basis.
 - 6.) **VA Integrated Operations Center (IOC):** Recommend retaining a lean IOC footprint as we did in 2014.
- b. **Advanced Planning:** By planning 2 years in advance, we will reduce the risk of problems due to the application of technology associated with the event. In particular we seek to expand the availability to match VOSBs to PDMs prior to the event, so that PDMs can be assured of meeting the right procurement ready VOSBs. It also allows us to lock-in the best cities to conduct this event and improve on marketing effort to attract more VOSB.

7. **Location:** The site assessment for the event has been completed. Based on feedback from approximately 46 potential venues, we recommend that the 2015 NVSBE be held in Pittsburgh, PA from November 14 - 20, 2015 and the 2016 NVSBE held in Minneapolis, MN on Oct. 31 - Nov 4, 2015. (Attachment A)

| DATE | LOCATION |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Nov 14 – 20, 2015 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Oct 31 – Nov 4, 2016 | Minneapolis, MN |

8. **Estimated Cost:** The overall estimated costs for the NVSBE are summarized below. For comparison purposes, we also show the actual costs for 2014. The non-travel cost increases are due to anticipated increases in registration fees and booth fees. Due to the nature of the no-cost contract, the contractor determines these fees, so we can only estimate them at this time. The increase in the travel cost estimate is due primarily to anticipated increases in airline tickets and travel voucher fees not included in 2014.

| | Training Event Title | Number of VA employees | Non-Travel Cost | Travel Cost | Contractor Support | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Actuals | NVSBE 2014 | 430 | \$219,304 | \$590,287 | \$1,629,016 | \$2,438,607 | \$5,671 |
| Estimate | NVSBE 2015 | 354 | \$346,000 | \$624,760 | \$1,373,957 | \$2,364,872 | \$6,680 |
| Estimate | NVSBE 2016 | 354 | \$367,700 | \$613,717 | \$1,383,957 | \$2,365,374 | \$6,682 |

9. **Risk Assessment:** Listed below are major risks identified:

| Risk | Mitigation |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Sites do not meet NVSBE needs | Completed site visits to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Minneapolis. Met with key venue, hotel and city officials. |
| Not attracting VOSBs | Early marketing of business opportunities and early announcement of venue. |
| Insufficient procurement ready VOSBs | Partner with PTACs, SBA, and other organizations to identify procurement-ready VOSBs prior to event. Announce VA Staff participation early. |
| Site availability | Get waiver signed for two years. |

10. **Budget Reviews and AAR:** To ensure effective oversight, coordination, and synergy, we will continue to use the Executive Steering Committee consisting of senior executives from all relevant VA organizations to review planning and coordinate activities. We will provide a cost update prior to the event to ensure all costs have been captured and waiver adjusted as needed. Actual event costs will be briefed along with an assessment of the extent to which the NVSBE accomplished its goals as part of the After Action Report process.

11. **Participation of VA Executive Leadership:** We propose that The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) attend the NVSBE split between two days; and the Undersecretaries attend to show senior leadership commitment to this important outreach effort. The attendance of Executive Leaders at past NVSBEs made a very positive impression on the stakeholder community. Several engagement activities effectively demonstrated VA commitment to our stakeholders at the highest level. Final schedules will be determined in coordination with the Executives to facilitate their participation. Pittsburgh and Minneapolis both have VA facilities within their metropolitan areas.

12. I am available at your convenience to discuss these two proposed events.



Thomas J. Leney

Attachments

A – Site Information – 2015/2016

B – 2014 After Action Review Summary

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: September 14, 2015

From: Under Secretary for Benefits

Subj: Request Waiver for VBA Challenge Session 2016-1 Training in FY 2016

Thru: Deputy Secretary

To: Secretary

1. In accordance with the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Conference policies and guidelines, and all applicable statutes and regulations, the Veterans Benefits Administration requests your approval of a waiver to implement centralized, face-to-face Challenge training classes in October 2015 through November 2015. The Challenge training session will cost in excess of the maximum allowable expense of \$500,000.
 - a. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)
 1. The execution of this conference is subject to the availability of FY 16 funds. If FY 16 funds are not available, this request will be canceled
 2. Comparative analysis for venue and cost have been conducted
 3. Conference participation is limited to required attendees
 4. This conference is necessary for the training of 113 VBA Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) and 100 Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs)
2. Purpose: The Challenge program is a national technical training curriculum that provides new Veterans Service Center employees with the skills they need to function effectively in their positions as Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) or Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs). Challenge provides hands-on training with computer applications and advances the new employees through progressively more challenging practice claims. Challenge training accelerates by six months the achievement of journey-level status of Challenge graduates. It is a key initiative in the transformation of VBA and a critical component in achieving our transformation goals for improved service delivery.
3. Goals and Objectives: Upon the conclusion of the resident portion of Challenge training:
 - Newly hired Veterans Service Representatives will develop 1.5 cases per day at 94% accuracy, or will promulgate 3.0 cases per day at 94% accuracy;
 - Newly hired Rating Veterans Service Representatives will demonstrate mastery by rating at least one simple (one-to-two issue) claim per day at 90% accuracy

4. Justification:

a. Challenge training accelerates proficiency in new employees.

(1) Challenge training is a proven program designed to establish in eight weeks employee skill levels that previously took six to eight months to achieve. On completion of Challenge training, employees complete 150 percent more claims per day in their first six months, with a 30 percent increase in accuracy, when compared to early student performance under the previous program.

(2) VBA normally conducts this training in a centralized model. Challenge 2016-1 is proposed in a distributed model to increase training capacity and constrain costs while preserving the emphasis on building proficiency.

b. Face-to-face Challenge training is required for effective student and instructor interaction.

(1) Challenge training emphasizes evaluation of student learning through pre- and post-tests; introductory skill practices using mock cases; closely supervised, actual work using live cases; and immediate feedback from experienced instructors. Challenge training has achieved dramatic results due to the adult learning principles built into the training methods.

(3) The personnel selected as instructors are highly experienced, journey-level employees, recommended by their regional office leaders and prepared with standardized training provided by Compensation Service. In the face-to-face Challenge training environment, the instructors gain substantial practice in teaching difficult topics and guiding the work effort of others.

(4) Face-to-face Challenge training is required to achieve the interaction described above, and because it is proven to achieve the desired performance results.

5. Business Case Analysis:

a. Challenge costs are effectively constrained.

(1) VBA conducted an analysis of the student population, and the availability and suitability of training facilities. VBA has successfully implemented Challenge training at the VBA training academy in the past, while assuring standardization of training because we travel nationally standardized instructors to the academy, and provide close oversight by Compensation Service course managers. The analysis revealed:

- The student population is spread across several regional offices. The student population requires training in one of two curricula.

- Sending all employees to a VBA facility significantly decreases costs associated with training space as the VBA facility can adequately accommodate the number of trainees and support staff.

(2) Use of existing government facilities, rather than commercial training facilities, leverages sunk costs of existing facilities. The classrooms are outfitted with suitable classroom equipment including computers connected to the VBA network and already loaded with relevant computer applications.

(3) The Compensation Services Training Facility is one of our premier Challenge training locations because of the benefits of scale and the experienced support infrastructure at the Academy. Approximately 100 Challenge students can be accommodated simultaneously, and instructor standardization oversight can be accomplished across multiple classrooms by a single course manager for each curriculum. Using the Academy leverages the sunk costs of our established training facility.

b. Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(1) Other versions of this training – including shorter, in-person classes and a piloted, web-based class – have not proven to effectively meet the training goals and objectives based on measured production and accuracy results. Face-to-face Challenge training provides substantial return on the investment.

(2) Our analysis concludes that the distributed model for face-to-face training effectively constrains costs and provides substantial return on the investment.

6. The proposed dates and location for the training session is:

| TIME | POTENTIAL LOCATIONS |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| October 13, 2015 to November 20, 2015 | Compensation Services Training Facility, Baltimore, MD. |

a. The training session will occur with:

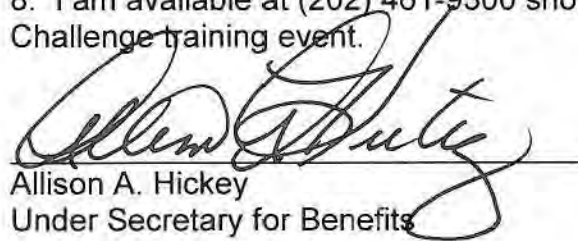
- 258 participants
 - 213 students and 7 claims support staff, and 38 Instructors based in Baltimore
- 220 participants will travel to the Compensation Services Training Facility:
 - o 7 personnel (7 claims support staff) support both the VSR and RVSR classes and travel from 10/13/15 to 11/20/15
 - o 113 VSRs – class travel dates – 10/13/15 to 11/20/15
 - o 100 RVSRs – class travel dates – 10/26/15 to 11/20/15

7. VBA is using only government facilities and support staff for this event. Expected costs are for student, instructor, and support staff travel, and for classroom supplies. Hotel costs include only lodging rates, and will be equal to or less than the GSA rate for the cities where training will occur. Estimated airfares, local transportation costs and supplies are included in the estimate. No “logo”, SWAG, food, light refreshments, or

Total Cost Breakdown for Average Cost per Participant (Students/Instructors/Support)

| | Number of VA employees | Number of Travelers | Travel Costs | Total Cost | Cost per Participant |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Support Staff | 7 | 7 | \$88,000 | \$88,000 | |
| VSR Class | 113 | 113 | \$1,225,000 | \$1,225,000 | |
| RVSR Class | 100 | 100 | \$755,000 | \$755,000 | |
| Baltimore Instructors | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Total | 258 | 220 | \$2,056,000 | \$2,056,000 | \$7,969 |

8. I am available at (202) 461-9300 should you wish to further discuss this proposed Challenge training event.


Allison A. Hickey
Under Secretary for Benefits

9/17/15
Date